

Hospital
Margaret Francke
(Mrs. Jacob Marion Francke, M. D.)

Tape 234

Interviewer: Doris Burton

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Doris Burton (DB): Margaret is going to talk about the old hospital on Main Street behind the Episcopal Church.

Margaret Francke (Margaret): When she says the old hospital she's referring to the building on Main Street that we have always called the lodge and more recent years the parish house ... 'til nearly worn out. It was built in 1911 by The Girl's Friendly Lodge in New York City and given as a gift to the Episcopal Church of Utah and was built and made usable soon thereafter. At the time of its construction there was need for a place for girls to come and pay board and room and go to school or work at a store or whatever there was for girls from families that could afford it.

The McCoy girls were some of the ones that came every week. They rode their horses down from Maeser and put them in the shed and came on in and had everything, the luxuries of home. They were nice big rooms, not overcrowded, and, for instance, when my mother and dad had to be out of town, go to Salt Lake or something like that, they could drop us off with Deaconess Knipper and we could be there for the two or three days that they were gone to get the automobile or the parts for the telephones or whatever they were doing, which made it pretty nice because both girls that were living at our home were working down at the telephone office.

Reverend Wesley Twelves came from, I think, Pennsylvania about that time and I think they were only here a couple of years, or such a matter, and soon after that time World War I broke out and the only thing to do was draft that building and we had another building downtown, the Chamber of Commerce, it was upstairs in the old hotel that May Jorgensen had. Do you remember what that was called?

DB: Was that the Commercial?

Margaret: Yes, the Commercial Club was upstairs. Well, anyway, May or Jane Murray took over and she could run the whole institution by herself, for any of you that remember her, but she kept things running then and we were away at boarding school at that time in Boise, Idaho, when most of the schools in the nation were closed or in quarantine. When we came home, the lodge had been opened again and the people from the reservation, the Indians, were such a part of the Episcopal Church. The church had come into this part of the world before the others and they had the government school up at Whiterocks and just so many things were organized. It's a long story to explain about how they got into the country, up through Wyoming and down over our jagged mountains. That's another day.

But then the children in the community wanted something to do and Deaconess Knipper took on the project and she had everybody bring their little doll bed and she taught us to be

nurses and we learned to make hospital beds and put the cover on the night stand and all of those things. The next year my sister and I went back to the boarding school and that was the year everybody got quarantined out, but it worked all right because by 11th of November we had the armistice and that became a happy time in life and coming back to the school and the church. We had a fairly good congregation and they were people like Mrs. Ward White and Mrs. [Kate] Adams across the street and the Whitmers and the Davises. It would take a while to list them, but a lot of the prominent people that lived in the community that had brought their cattle in over the —not Blue Mountain, what would that be?

DB: Diamond?

Margaret: Oh yes, Diamond, and that's really an interesting chapter in the history. That's not getting back to the hospital very good, but the necessity of it. The flu epidemic hit and the people all got down with nobody to take care of them, so the Episcopal Church sent a nurse in from St Mark's Hospital [in Salt Lake] to carry on. Her name was Miss Birchell and she was a registered nurse. That was just considered an outstanding hospital then. I don't remember after. 'Course we lost such a lot of people in the flu epidemic, but, there again, those two large facilities to take care of the people.

Well, that went on then and after a while I came back from nurse's training and school in Salt Lake and finally went to work, but I didn't go to work, I was drafted. I lived at Ft. Duchesne and Mr. Page just came up to the mine and got me and told me to go to work that night. I didn't want to, I hadn't been out of training that long, but that was quite an experience working with the Indians alone.

DB: Was that over at Ft. Duchesne? Mr. Page was what?

Margaret: He was the government superintendent that was in charge at that time. There was the government man and two, I think, three nurses, so we had an alternate and two doctors.

DB: What were the doctors' names? Do you remember?

Margaret: Dr. [Roy V.] Rogers, the one my son is named for, and [Dr. Frank] Mock, and we lived on the campus which is the old fort that the cavalry had before. Well, then I got married and came to Vernal. I thought that was easier than working so hard. So, Doctor (Jacob Marion Francke, MD) and I got married.

I was drafted almost immediately on a private case and so that kept me busy for a while, 'cause you went on a case and you stayed. You didn't go home or anything; you slept and took care of the patient right there and then. If they had constant dressings, you changed them. The doctor came by a couple times a day to see how things were going. Now when I go to a reception or something, very often I'll meet young people and they'll say, "Oh, you go to that church up there where I was born, don't you?" And I'll ask them who the nurses were and they remember a lot of us and some of the mamas and I have some pretty good laughs because sometimes you have to laugh to keep from crying, you know, and that building was put together so that it was

functional. The entrance that we come in now is right off of the pavement and that was our nursery and we had a piece of board down there.

DB: There on the west side.

Margaret: We had market baskets sitting on that shelf for our babies and we closed the door and we put shelves up there for the diapers and the nighties and the dish pan to wash them in and all of that and put them back and fed them. There was a door coming in and out of the hall and then out in the main building there was a great big ramp.

Suppose this was a ramp and you are going to take these patients up to the second floor. Well, we call downtown and we try to find some man that's got a few minutes to come and help us get that dolly up the ramp. One night I already had six patients and they brought me a woman with a broken back from Duchesne and that was a long ramp that night cause you'd get up there to that turn and then you'd almost have to lift it to make it around to come back the rest of the way.

One night I just got so tired, I couldn't stand it. I had three little kids, four kids, at home and a husband that was very disgusted that I considered taking a job like that. But we didn't tell Will Henderson that and Will Henderson and Mr. Weeks knew what the situations were, but they just said, "We just have to have you." So that's the way they handled it and it's too bad, but we just worked so fast that I really don't remember very many of the girls that I worked with. Alma Jeffries and I worked together quite a bit, but those women have gone away now and I've just almost forgotten. We had a functioning kitchen. Anybody would have liked to have had it just a little bigger in their own home, but we had a pressure cooker and we bottled the beans and we bottled the beets or anything that anybody brought us and put up our own fruit.

DB: The nurses did this?

Margaret: Yes, and we always tried to keep an operating kit ahead so that if we got an emergency we wouldn't be caught too short because Eskelson, oh, he worked awful fast and he wanted things. By then he had owned and was operating the hospital himself. He had bought it from the Episcopal Church.

DB: That's what I wondered.

Margaret: I've forgotten. I should have looked up some of these dates, doesn't really matter, but he owned and operated the hospital. He had a door cut in from the house he built next door [east] with the intention of having the entrance between the two buildings so that he could just go back and forth and not have to get out and drive his car around all night and so they...

Oh, we're still in the kitchen, aren't we? We would do all of this canning and then we would do the autoclaving and do our instruments and sheets and all of that stuff and put them aside. So we didn't have any idle time. We hated an emergency to come in, but we had a little fun slot machine down at June Allen's--Pack, Lynn Pack, had a little dining room with the outside luncheon and we would stop in there and play the slot machine on our way home. There were an

awful lot of people in the Uinta Basin that hated that slot machine. They said no hospital was worth building on that kind of money. But we finally got the hospital built and from there, well, I guess I haven't worked.

DB: You mean, talking about the new hospital after that one? They used the slot machine money to do that?

Margaret: I hope they did. I'll go and ask somebody like Hal Duke for sure whether that's what they did or not but the Jaycees, I think, was behind that. I don't know that it's written anywhere. [They did build the hospital with the money the Jaycees made off from the slot machines they had all over town.]

DB: Did Eskelson actually get the door connected to his house?

Margaret: Oh, yes. He could open both doors. There were three patients on the side next to him, and then you came into the hall where this big ramp was, and then over on the other side there were three women with new babies and then we would do our surgery in the dining room that's in the back of the building. The building is pretty much intact as it always has been and our church has the big plaque from the National Register. Sometime this summer we plan to put it on the wall but we've had it for years and so that piece of ground and the buildings have been a great deal of service of the community all these years.

DB: They never lost anybody down the ramp?

Margaret: No, you wouldn't dare. They would go on out under the apricot tree. But it [the building] was [also] used for Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, all kinds of women's organizations, bridge tournaments, raising funds maybe to build or put in a new furnace or something like that. Just name it and we've had it. Well, the important things that stick out are things like when Eve Ashton had her big celebration here when she was the lady of...

DB: National Commander? American Legion?

Margaret: And we had a luncheon there at the parish house for Mrs... I'm sorry; these names leave me once and a while. She was the secretary of the treasury. Somebody speak up.

DB: I can't say it either.

Margaret: But, anyway, that was a real thrill and we were just always having... And in these more recent years we've had priests. I ought to have got that information from Iva, too. She has the books and she may be working on something like this and get what information you have. About this time of year, they bring one of the classes from school. It's usually the fourth graders and for several years now they have been coming to see the beauty of the church. It is an English design and it has the scissor beams and our stained glass windows.

DB: They are beautiful.

Margaret: And very valuable. That's why we've had to cover them with that protective shield, which cost us a lot, but they don't want to lose them. The youngsters are really interested and they look forward to it so much that as long as we can do it I guess we'll bring them up-to-date. They go to all of the buildings on that day. The Catholic Church, Congregational and the banks, the tabernacle and I think the other museum. You know, that's a lot of interesting material that we have here to offer people.

DB: Do you remember any specific cases that you had, emergency cases or?

Margaret: Well, yes. But I'll tell you they went so fast, I don't remember. We had an oil well blow up, an oil driller on the road to LaPoint. Now our little hospital held about six or eight people and they brought this whole crew in, covered with oil and fire and everything and we had beds lined up there by the lobby. No, we didn't have a lobby, we had the front porch. You'd come up on the front porch and it used to be very elaborate. We are going to put it back that way this year, I think. Then you'd wait there to go in to see Mr. Henderson or Mr. Weeks about a room and everything.

DB: They were the administrators of the hospital?

Margaret: I don't know who else was, but I remember them because I worked with them. That was all the lobby we had. It was about as big as this and we had a little desk, you know, just a little fancy desk like mama had with two little drawers. We did all this charting and everything and after surgery everybody would go home and leave the one nurse on duty. We'd have to clean them all up and get them ready for night.

Our beds were just old rickety nothings. We were getting by on a hair string and dot, and I dropped a patient out of bed. That old mattress just went down and he went off on the floor. You might have to take this out of here or everybody will get sick. Well, it took lots of time getting him to admit to be operated on. My dad was over from Myton and this man had worked for him a lot. We got to laughing that you wouldn't have a bit of trouble if you had a banker on your hands, but we had a farmer. Dorothy Hansen was up there with us, she was Dr. Hansen's wife, and so we got him on the table and they operated and I said, I told my dad, I said, "My God, Joe was upside down. It was a perforated ulcer on the other side of his stomach and there's no way to go in here, so you had to go in here and then get over like this. One of the worst kinds of things to have happen and you know in three weeks... Well, I'll go back to my story about dropping him. The mattress just fell off the bed...

DB: Is this before he was operated on? After?

Margaret: No, after, after everybody had gone home and I was there in the building alone. The three men screaming, "Help me, help me, help me." And the women, "What's happening?" Here

he is sitting up in the corner and blood by the gallons coming out of that man. Beets coming out, corn coming out, peas coming out. It was summer time and he had it all. I grabbed for the phone and I said, "Anybody on the line, run out and stop Dr. Hansen. He is on his way to Jensen."

Well, they got Joe on the line and had him come to the phone and he said, "What are you fussing about? He's still breathing, isn't he?" And I said, "Yes, but I don't know what to do." He says, "Put him back to bed." Now that's why we've all got flat feet and bad backs. Imagine lifting a man from surgery up onto a bed like that. Not a soul there to help you just ? scrubbing floors and things, getting ready for the next one. That was a frightening thing for me, because I had to decide what kind of medication to give. But, you know, he lived. He was out here digging a ditch, out here by Andrew King's house, in three weeks. It was that kind of a hospital. You lived in spite of them, not because of them. When we took it over it was in awful shape.

DB: So, besides Dr. [Joseph] Hansen and Dr. [Farley] Eskelson, I know Dr. [Ray E.] Spendlove worked there. Dr. [Tyrrell] Seager also worked there, didn't he?

Margaret: I believe they all did. My husband didn't. He mixed with the Medical Society, so he just stayed home. He did lots of work, but in his office. I was trying to think, seems like we had another doctor here and he lived in Joe's house. Well, that was after Joe died, though, and they'd gone to Salt Lake. He had a great big organ and we borrowed it for the Episcopal service on Easter one time and the power went out. I think the only time in history the power went out on Easter. Funny things.

DB: Well, where did your husband come from?

Margaret: From Kansas City, was where he graduated.

DB: How come he came to Vernal?

Margaret: Somebody just told him it was wise to go west and so he went west as far as his money would take him. He ended up at Garland, Utah, and Dr. Richards was just leaving to go to New York to do post graduate work and they came yelling out to the train, "Is there a doctor in the crowd?" So, there was where he got off and went to work. Then he came down here to relieve Dr. [George W.] Green and Dr. [G.H.] Christy. Well, I'm back to World War I again. That's where everything seems to start and finish. They had all gone into the service with the intent of going overseas and they ended being ambulance drivers on the east coast. [Weldon K.] Bullock and [John H.] Clarke in the middle and [Homer] Rich. There's a good write up in one of the Daughters of the Pioneers. It's either that or the letter that Helen Spendlove...

DB: Yes, we have both of those.

Margaret: So, don't need to repeat that.

DB: So, your husband just came out here and stayed, huh?

Margaret: But in between all of those times, he lived in Portland and Eugene, Oregon, and Malad, Idaho, and in that mountainous country where you went by skis everywhere, the Sawtooth Mountains. Then he was employed at St. Anthony's in Boise in connection with the gold mines in Idaho. He just loved this country like so many people. They come here and they just can't get away. Dr. Green never came back. He and his wife had separated. Dr. Christy died here. Most everybody would remember Dr. Christy, who was so much of the life of the country.

DB: Where was your husband's office at?

Margaret: Sometimes in the Vernal Bank Building, sometimes in the Uintah State [Bank building]. Every so often, whoever was operating those buildings of the Coltharps, or, I don't really know how that rotated, but it would make a difference. They'd sell something or put them all in new offices or something like that and during World War I and this opening of the Rangely field, these people that had the financing lived in the Hotel Vernal. They were the ones with the money and so, of course, they had apartments up in the Hotel Vernal. However, an apartment consisted of one john down around the building.

DB: You mean the Bank of Vernal?

Margaret: Yes, and we had an apartment up there, too, but later in the year we moved into Mrs. Mease's house. That's over across the street from the old, not the tithing office, school board. The Catholic Church then bought that and then Doctor bought our house from Mr. Samuels and my house has the plaque on it. It's in this little... I think that booklet's one of the greatest things they ever put out. Oh, there's that thing I've been looking for.

DB: I was going to make a copy of it.

Margaret: Well, go ahead. It's this thing they were paying tribute to because it's been there forever and will be. That's that, it isn't it, after all. I've got to go home and find that thing. Well, that's it right there. It's a sloping thing. It looks like it's going to fall down, but when you read all of this, why it'll...

DB: Well, I can remember when your husband was in the Bank of Vernal.

Margaret: Yes, he had offices up there with Dr. Clarke and Dr. Christy and Bullock.

DB: What dentist was it? Stevens?

Margaret: Stevens was in the Vernal Bank and Shimmin was over in Uintah State. I couldn't help but stick my nose around today and I was in Thorne's and saw the big safe. Dad brought one of those big safes down out of the Uintah State Bank for them one time, but I don't know whether this is the one, 'cause this is the one that's always been there as far as I know.

DB: Oh, the Bank of Vernal used to be there.

Margaret: Yes it was originally and then the two factions had a fight and we had two banks.

DB: That's interesting, isn't it?

Margaret: Didn't seem like I did a very good job on it, but that's kind of like the highlights.

DB: That's great.

Margaret: Our new minister is just churning up the world. He's so young and vigorous. He is plagued with muscular dystrophy.